3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

are increasing in numbers. The average number of children reared in one family may be from three to four. The number of children born by one woman is not low; women with ten children are no exception. But as a rule no more than three or four children grow up to maturity in one family, the rest dying from want of reasonable nursing. If in course of time the natives are taught to take better care of their children, the population will no doubt strongly increase. A cause of the low birth rate in many families is the fact that a man is not supposed to have intercourse with his wife while a baby is nursing, that is, till the baby is from two to two and a half years old. They consider it a great shame for a woman to become pregnant before this time has elapsed. If such a case happens, they generally will say that the woman has committed adultery.

OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF THE PEOPLE

The Shilluks are tall in figure, the average height of the men being nearly 1.80 m.[1] They are generally lean, rather narrow in the shoulders, and have but thin calves; their arms and legs are long, especially the legs below the knees and the forearms; hands and feet are small. A characteristic posture of the Shilluk man is to stand on one leg, and bending the other, press the sole of his foot against the inner surface of the knee, while one hand holds a spear stuck into the ground; he will stand thus for hours, looking admiringly at his cattle. They are very clever in running and jumping, and are capable of sustaining considerable fatigue.

Their skin is dark, almost black; albinoes seem to be rare. The physical appearance of the Shilluks is not that of pure negroes, they might rather be called negroids, in spite of their dark colour. Most of them have a fierce, sometimes a proud, haughty look. The cheek-bones and lips are protruding, but not excessively; the nose is flat, but high noses are not infrequent. Young people of both sexes are finely built, while in old age they generally become very thin and bony. Their gait is erect and elastic.

PAINTING THE BODY

What makes the Shilluks look most ugly and almost frightful in the eyes of a newcomer, is their habit of smearing the whole body. While the lower part is covered with ashes, the breast and head are painted with red earth or with chalk, or, if they can afford it, with oil or butter. Sometimes the whole body is painted white or red, and lines or figures are drawn across the face.

EXTRACTION OF INCISORS

Like most Nilotic negroes the Shilluk remove the lower incisors; this is done in early childhood; its omission would, in the belief of the natives, cause sickness; for instance, a case occurred where the teeth were taken out to cure sore eyes; a woman who had just had them removed from her child, said that unless they were taken out, her child would undoubtedly be deformed in some way, when it grew to maturity. Another explanation for extracting the theeth

[1] five feet ten inches.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Comboni thereupon began two Congregations, the Verona Fathers and the Missionary Sisters of Verona. In May 1871 he was made Pro-Vicar of Central Africa, and on January 26th, 1873, left Cairo for Khartoum to take up residence there. He had been preceded by some of his missionaries, and immediately opened stations at Dilling, El Obeid and Berber. In 1877 he was consecrated Bishop and made Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa, but returning to Khartoum from Rome he found the Sudan desolated by a terrible famine which caused the death of hundreds of thousands of natives and many priests. He was thus forced to abandon his cherished project of the expansion of the mission. Dr. Matteuci, the famous explorer, wrote concerning this:

> Mgr. Comboni sees in the sad loss of nearly all his missionaries the delaying, for who knows how long, of the realization of his vast projects. In the last few months he had begun an agricultural station on the Blue Nile at Gadaref destined to have a great future; he had made arrangements for the establishment of a station at Fashoda, the capital of the Shilluk country, one of the most barbarous and unhealthy places in Central Africa, and was then preparing an expedition to the Equatorial Lakes which would have gone down in history as one of the most important achievements of Daniel Comboni.

Comboni always had in mind the poor Shilluk whom he had encountered on his journey to Holy Cross, and it was to help them that he planned to open a mission at Fashoda, but the famine postponed indefinitely this design, and the trials of the mission reached a climax with the death of the great apostle himself in 1881. It seemed that shipwreck was near, but the mission weathered the storm, only to come to grief a few months later. In 1881 the Mahdist revolt broke out, and as Dilling, El Obeid and Berber fell to the Mahdi, the priests, brothers and nuns became their prisoners. Many of them died as the result of the treatment they received when they refused to deny their faith and become Moslems;